

KJA Bulletin

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



NOVEMBER 1983/KESLEV 5744

JACOB MASLIAH
PRESIDENT

At this beginning of the New Year 5744 let me take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support of our community. I sincerely hope the new year will be a prosperous one for you and your family

It is our duty to teach our children the Hebrew language and our old sacred traditions in order that we all, hand in hand, save our Sect and follow the high, heavenly constitution.

We may stop a moment and deeply think in our mind 'How can we save our religion?' The answer is so simple. First of all, we have to seek mercy from God. He is close to our hearts, especially to those who have true faith.

In addition, we have to be proud of our religion and never to deny it, no matter what may be. And we must teach our children to be the same because we are the most ancient sect in the world.

Here is a message about the forthcoming Board Election for 1984. As stated in the Charter of the KJA, the Election Committee, headed by our member Joe Abel, prepared the necessary preliminaries for mailing. We thank the Election Committee for their diligent efforts. Your own personal vote in this election will be an important one!

As we progress, we pray that God may keep us on the Right Track.

May God Bless You,



Shalom Rab

בשם השם נעשה ונצליח

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD WE SHALL WORK AND WE SHALL SUCCEED

THE TORAH THAT WE LOVE

God created us equal. He handed down the Torah and called its followers the Chosen People. Why ? Because the Laws it contains, which govern all aspects of our intimate life, are very strict. It takes dedication, insight, courage and resilience to obey these Laws. However when this impass is overcome, as the Book says, you will live within them , i.e. they were not meant to abolish your life.

Q: How was the Torah handed down?

Ans : Read this frequently occurring passage, "And God talked to Moses saying 'Talk to the sons of Israel and tell them ...'". The answer is : The Torah was passed along in a verbal , oral form.

Q: Why was it written down?

Ans: Simply because God said so . It is mentioned in the Torah that the Lord told Moses to write it down.

Q: Why did God tell Moses to do that? Ans: So that you and I read it and study it and know fully what God expect us to do.

Q: What happened after the death of Moses?

Ans: There were no divine Laws after the death of Moses. The Kings and Prophets continued to document and convey their teachings. That is why the Book is referred to in entirety as "Tannakh," an abbreviation of the three Hebrew characters "T" for Torah, "N" for Nebiim (Prophets), and "Kh" for Ketoubbim (Writings).

Q: Let's go back to the Laws. Was everything written down?

Ans: Yes, of course. The Torah says "Torat Adonai Temimah" which means that the Laws of God are complete. In fact, somewhere else there is a warning saying "For what I am giving you today you shall not add or take from a thing."

Q: For every Law there is an explanation or at least there are some people to interpret it .Where are these explanations and who are the interpreters?

Ans: So you want me to tell you where they are? Well, then read this: "For the Law that I am commanding to you today is neither an enigma to you nor far away from you. It is not in the sky so that you have to ask who is going to go up the sky to bring it to us and will let us hear it before we do it. And it is not from across the sea so that you have to ask who is going to cross the sea to bring it and let us hear it before we do it. For this thing is very close to you. It's in your mouth, and it's also in your heart to do."

Do you know now who interpret these Laws?. You and I do.

Q: This means the Laws are not written in a dogmatic format. Is that why they are universal in domain and will apply to all the generations for all time?

Ans: Right! Now You've got it.

Q: Does this also mean that I may differ from you in the explanations?

Ans: Yes and no. There is a famous Karaite sentence saying "You should look and study very carefully the Torah and do not rely on my opinion". Free logical thinking and individualism may lead, of course to a different opinion, that's why I answered yes. The simplicity and the symbolic values as transmitted in the Torah will lead you and I to a common consensus. That's what made me answer no.

Q: One last question ? Who are the Karaites?

Ans: Simply the people of the Scriptures. The derivation of their ritual laws are solely and directly from the Script. They have had continuity in existence up to the present time. The discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the documents of Cairo Geniza and the collections of Abraham Firkovich are nothing but proven historical indication on the righteousness of their beliefs.

More to come in the next talk.

Shalom.

J.P.

SELECTED TOPICS FROM THE BOARD MEETINGS

September

-All newly elected board members are required to take the oath.
Passed

-A donation of \$225.00 to our supporters of The Peninsula Sinai Congregation. Passed

-Car pooling organization for the people who would like to attend Shabbat Prayers was delegated to Joe Moussa, (415) 873-4491

-Maurice Pessah announced the approval of our tax exempt request from the state of California

-Fred Lichaa has negotiated a six month extension to use Peninsula Sinai Synagogue.

October

-The election committee for 1984 was formed. - Joe Abel - Chairman.

-A review of KJA financial status was requested by the President in order to open a bank account.

-The General Fund-Raising Project was delegated to Mary Mourad.

-Joe Pessah provided mailing-list updates to all Board Members.

November

-Our Bank was account opened with approval signatures by the President, the Vice-president, the Treasurer, plus the secretary as auditor.

-The KJA fiscal year starts in April. Passed

-Five funds were discussed and approved, and goals were set for 1983 as follows:

Temple	60,000
Educational	5,000
Library	1,000
Sisterhood Division	400
General	1,000

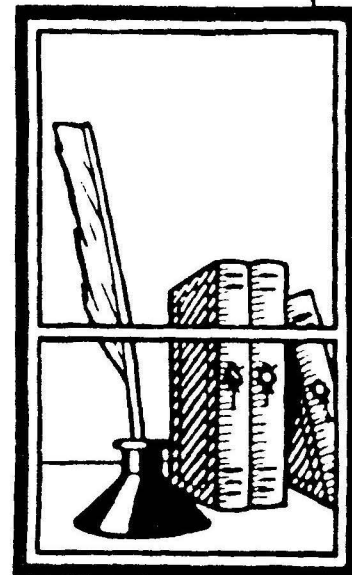
-Election procedures submitted by Joe Abel, discussed and approved.

From the Editor's

desk

by: Raymonde Pessah

Numerous interested historians have studied the origin of Karaisme, its doctrine and its ontology (metaphysics). To start your own library, I encourage you to order the books listed below through the public library of your region. All you need to do is to show the librarian which books you would like to order, and they will inform you of the procedure. Note that some of the references are in Arabic (item 1), while others are in Arabic and French (item 7)



1. Kitab Al Anwar Wal-Maraquib - Code of Karaite Law by Ya-Qub Al-Karqisani (in Arabic) Editor: Leon Nemoy - New York - The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation (1941)
2. Kitab Jami ' Al-Alfaz (Agron) of David Ben Abraham Al-Fasi by Solomon I. Skoss New Haven Yale University Press - London Humphrey Milford -Oxford University Press MDCCCC XXXVI
3. Karaite Anthology - by Leon Nemoy - Yale Judaica Series Editor Julian Obermann
4. The Judean Scrolls and Karaism, by Naphtali Wieder, London, East and West Library, 1962, XII
5. Text and Studies in Jewish History and Literature - by Jacob Mann - Published for the author by the Hebrew Press and the Jewish publication society of America - Philadelphia
6. The 13th Tribe- by Arthur Koestler - London 1976
7. Le Karaisme by Simon Szyszman - 1980 - Editions l'Age d'Homme - Lausanne, Suisse.
8. Christomathie Arabe - by Silvestre de Sacy- 3 Volumes (Arabic/French) - Reprinted in W. Germany
9. Nouveaux Apercus sur Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte by A. Dupont Sommer - (in French) - Depot: Librairie A. Maisonneuve 11, Rue Saint-Sulpice, Paris (VI) - Copyright by Lasalle (1953)

AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE BOARD

Maurice Pessah

It has been almost a year since the inception of our effort to organize the first Karaite Jewish Community in the United States.

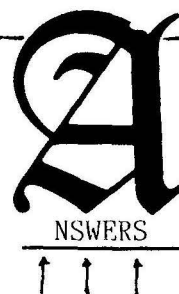
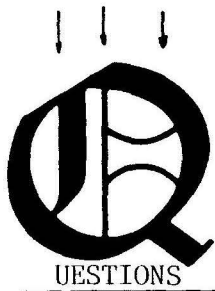
At that time, few were confident that the organization would reach its current state, despite the initial strong support.

It took a lot of dedication and several months of hard work to achieve our goal.

I am therefore proud to announce that KJA is now a recognized, non-profit religious organization. This means that all donations can be claimed as tax deductible, retroactive as of March, 1983.

Several funds which are meant to strengthen our cause and entity have been approved by the Board of Directors. You will receive a description in the mail.

Now is the time to consider seriously your commitment to our fund raising drive. Please give thought to how much you can honestly afford to contribute. On behalf of the Board, I thank you in advance for your continuous support.



Q: WHAT ARE THE PLANS TO TEACH HEBREW TO OUR CHILDREN?

A: Temple Sinai in Foster City has offered to teach our children Hebrew for a nominal fee, without a condition of membership. Until our own Temple is built, you may want to send your children to Sunday Hebrew School to learn how to read and write Hebrew.

Q: HOW DO I SUBMIT MY DONATION?

A: Make your checks payable to KJA
KJA
P.O.Box 4235
Mtn. View, Ca. 94040

If donations are in cash, they should be presented in person to our treasurer, Alan Ovadia, who will be glad to issue a receipt.

Q: I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AND PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN OUR COMMUNITY. HOW COULD I ACCOMPLISH THIS?

A: KJA is in constant need of volunteers in the area of fund raising, bulletin publication, car pooling, and social activities. In fact, we really need your personal help in various projects if you have time to volunteer right now. Please contact any of our board members for proper coordination.

N E W S

- A hearty thank you to JOSETTE SELIM for her outstanding and her professional work done in the translation of: THE EGYPTIAN KARAITES AND THEIR TREASURE by Simon Szyszman
- ROGER PESSAH and ZAKI EL KODSI visited Cairo last September and brought some pictures of our sanctuaries in Egypt.
- Thanks to ANN CESSARIS, a supporter of KJA, who has donated one thousand copies of her book PITA THE TRADITIONAL WAY IN EASY GOURMET RECIPES.



A gathering of our future Karaite generation after helping with the Simhat Torah Prayers.

- Our Karaite group in Israel has kindly sent us several hundred copies of their calendar which we are glad to include with this bulletin
- Thanks to KENT SUTHERLAND, husband of SHEILLA PESSAH and an English professor at Canada College, who proofread the bulletin before publishing.



C O N G R A T U L A T I O N S

מזל טוב

- DANIEL WAHED for his Bar Mitzvah, held on October 8th, 1983 at Temple Iseah.
- NABIH & ESTHER MANGOUBI on the birth of their daughter MICHELLE, born on August 25th, 1983.

TODAH RABBAH

תודה רבה

FROM A GRATEFUL CONGREGATION TO OUR FAITHFUL DONORS:

Mr. & Mrs. Joe ABEL
Mrs. Marie ASLAN
Mr. & Mrs. Sabet DARWISH
Mr. & Mrs. Maurice EL-KODSI
Dr. & Mrs. Elie HABIB
Mr. Emil HABIB
Mr. & Mrs. Yomtov HEFEZ
Mr. & Mrs. Amin KHEDR
Mr. & Mrs. Joe KHEDR
Mr. & Mrs. Marc KHEDR
Mr. & Mrs. Maurice LICHAA
Mr. & Mrs. Fred LICHAA
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Mr. Marzouk Youssef MARZOUK
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Mr. & Mrs. Joe OVADIA
Mr. & Mrs. Solomon OVADIA
Mr. & Mrs. Amin PESSAH
Dr. Benjamin PESSAH
Mr. & Mrs. Jacques PESSAH
Mr. & Mrs. Joe PESSAH
Mr. & Mrs. Maurice PESSAH
Mr. & Mrs. Michael SADDIK
Mr. & Mrs. Tom SELIM
Mr. & Mrs. Hosni TAHAN
Mr. & Mrs. David SIAHOU
Mrs. Sarina WAHED

ברכה לחולי

Refuah Shlemah, our wishes for a full and speedy recovery, to Alice Ovadia, Maurice Pessah, Abdel Hay Tahan and Ronit Ovadia

The sincere condolences of the entire Congregation go to the family of El-Gamil on the passing of their beloved husband and father Mr. David El-GAMIL who Passed away on August 11, 1983. Mr. DAVID ABRAHAM EL-GAMIL, husband of Mrs. Regina El-Gamil of Baltimore. He was killed as a pedestrian in a tragic accident by a drunk-driver. Mr. David El-Gamil was born on June 17, 1924 in Egypt, Cairo. May God Bless his soul and open His Heaven's door to welcome him. A month-end prayer took place in Baltimore, Maryland (Hazan: Mr. Yacoub Cohen)

ZEKHERS

Emil Habib	In memory of Mr. Maurice HABIB
Mourad Marzouk	In grateful and loving remembrance of Wife, Fortunee Mourad
Michel Saddik	In loving remembrance of Eliahou Ben Youssef Saddik and Kamar Bat Yeshaa Ayoub
Joe Moussa	In memory of Father, Shalom Moshe Pessah
Joe Abel	In grateful and loving remembrance of Youssef Mourad
Eliahou Obadia	In memory of Yeshoua Obadia and Fortunee Massuda
Abraham Massuda	In loving remembrance of Father, Moussa Massuda
Sabet Darwish	In memory of Miriam Abraham Darwish, Ovadia Sabtai Darwish and Eliahou Ibrahim Marzouk
Fortunee Lichaa	In memory of Farag Vita Matouk and Amin Yacoub
Joe Moussa	In grateful remembrance of Rabbi White and all the Jewish Victims in Lebanon
Flore Marzouk	In memory Youssef Mattatia Marzouk, Esther Mattatia and Mattatia El Gazzar
Cecilia Tahan	In grateful remembrance of Yeshoua Ovadia Shammass
Sarina Pessah	In memory of Rahel Kahil, Nazli Yacoub Haina and Soltana Zakaria
Sarina Wahed	In grateful remembrance of Yehouda Youssef Abdel Wahed, Esther Nounou and Lieto Youssef El Kodsí
Sylvia Selim	In grateful memory of Rahmin Farag Levi, Belle Farag Shammass and Zaki Moussa Menasha
Marie Aslan	In memory of Eliahou Yacoub Aslan, Eli Amin Lichaa and Lessi Amin Lichaa
Albert Mourad	In loving memory of Eliahou Gazzar, Sarina Menasha, Lieto Mourad and Nazli Afrangui
Elie Moussa	In loving remembrance of Father, Shalom Moshe Pessah
Angel Habib	In memory of Abdou Yacoub Shiammas and Maurice Habib
Laila Tahan	In memory of Soltana Tahan, Hafez Eliahou Tahan and Pauline Mourad

SCHEDULE OF PRAYERS & EVENTS

Unless mentioned otherwise, all prayers are held at Temple Sinai of Peninsula Sinai Congregation:

Note: The temple is Kosher. No heating is allowed on Shabbat. Dairy food and cakes made with vegetable oil are what you may bring in.

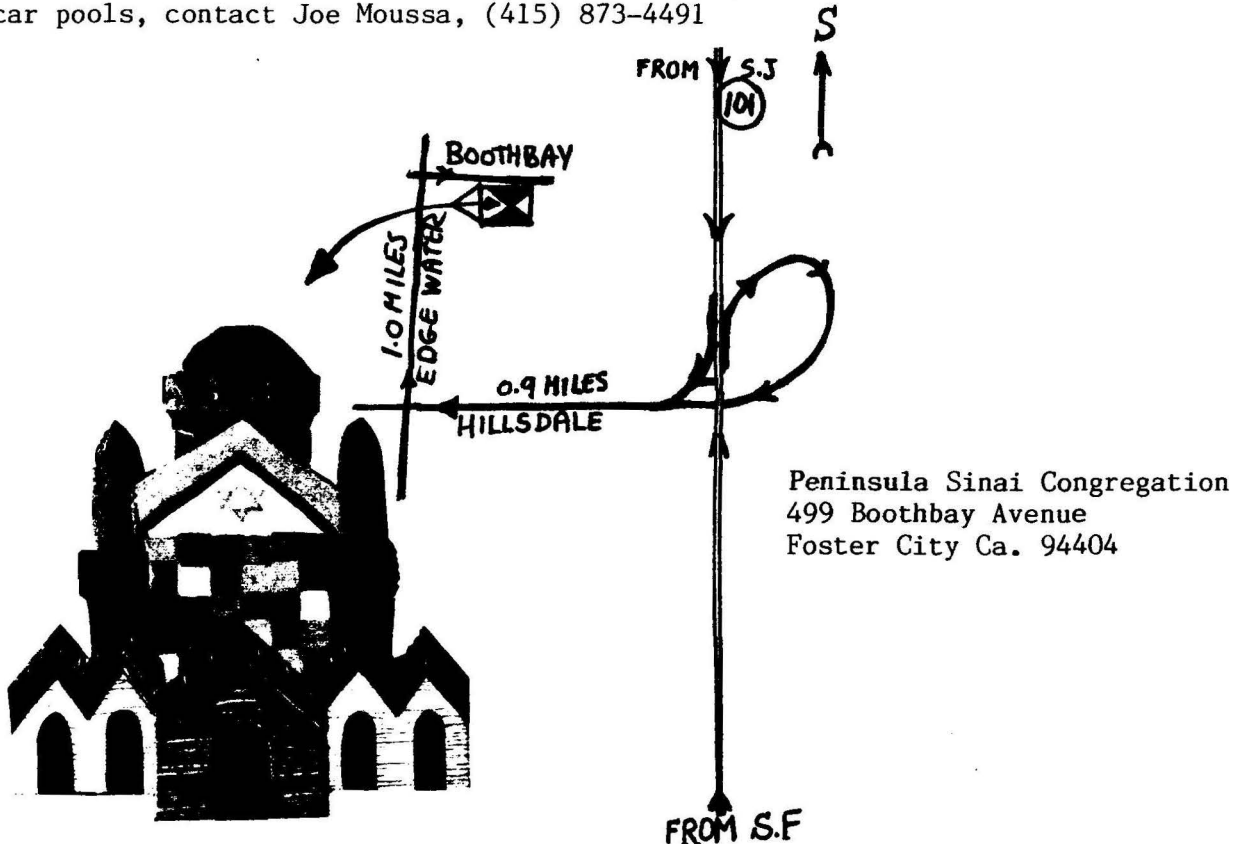
PRAYERS

DECEMBER	3rd	(Shabbat)	Perashat Mikkess Zekher for Dr. Youssef Marzouk & Mr. Moussa Massouda
JANUARY	7th	(Shabbat)	Perashat Ba El Paro
FEBRUARY	4th	(Shabbat)	Perashat Teroumah
MARCH	3rd	(Shabbat)	Perashat Pikoudeh

EVENTS

DECEMBER	6th	Tuesday	Rosh Hodesh Beginning of the Month Tebet
DECEMBER	15th	Thursday	Fast of 10th of Tebet
JANUARY	4th	Wednesday	Rosh Hodesh Beginning of the Month Shebet
FEBRUARY	3rd	Friday	Rosh Hodesh Beginning of the Month Adar 1
FEBRUARY	11th	Saturday	Shabbat before Pourim The reading of the Megillah
FEBRUARY	16th	Thursday	First day of Pourim Held at the home of: Joe and Raymonde Pessah
FEBRUARY	17th	Friday	The Second Day of Pourim
MARCH	4th	Sunday	Rosh Hodesh Beginning of the Month Adar 2

Additional Prayers for feasts and Zekhers are scheduled in different homes. Please contact Fred Lichaa, (415) 341-4725. For car pools, contact Joe Moussa, (415) 873-4491





A view of the Hekhal at Moshe Derai Sanctuary in Egypt.



Two story-level for women to pray at Moshe Derai Synagogue



View of the entrance to the Hara Synagogue.



ZAKI EL KODSI and ROGER PESSAH standing next to the oldest dated Torah which is kept in the safe in Egypt.



What was once the Harah Sanctuary is today nothing but a depot.

The abandoned yet precious and dear treasures of the Karaites traces in Egypt. Do they invoke our tears or inspire us for a renewed and firm commitment to the Torah.

Yes, we will start it again in America. (see related article next page).

THE EGYPTIAN KARAITES

AND THEIR TREASURE

(By Simon Szyszman)

Translated by Josette Selim

(This is the first of several articles that will appear
in section You and Karaism)

Simon Szyszman {pronounced shikman} was born in 1909. His family was related not only to the Crimea group of Karaites but also to the Poland and Lithuanian group. He had then the opportunity to know well the European Karaite Community.

After his studies at the University of Vilno, he began his research in the archives and libraries of Vilno and of Varsovie.

The nature of the documents available directed his first studies toward the history of the Karaite Communities in the territories that used to belong to Lithuania and Poland.

After World War II, Szyszman settled in the West, it was a time when the discoveries of the "Dead Sea scrolls" were reminding us of the role played by the "Esseniste" in the evolution of the biblical monotheism. The study of these writings, hidden for two thousands years, had early on attracted attention to Karaism which appeared to be a direct descendent of the Essenism. This relationship would enlighten many of the biblical scholars who dedicated themselves to such research. After the discoveries of Qumran W.F. Albright stated that "The background of Karaism should be reexamined".

Some Esseniens writings had already been discovered in the beginning of our century, in a deposit of old manuscripts located at Fustat, one of Cairo's suburbs, in a building that for many centuries and until 1313 used to belong to the Karaite. In order to uncover the precise history of the "Geniza of Cairo" (this is the name that this deposit got in the expert world) and at the same time to meet some Karaite in the Arab countries Szyszman undertook a trip to Egypt in 1953. In 1947, while on a tour of Syria, he searched for the traces of Karaites communities in that country. The last one from Damas was dissolved in 1831 after the dwindling of its strength.

Twice in 1955 and in 1973, Szyszman visited the community of Istambul, last refuge of many karaite groups formerly flourishing in the Balkans and in the Bysantine Empire.

The abundant documentation referred to in the western libraries, specially those of Paris, allowed Szyszman to follow the diffusion of the karaism in the Middle Age, in the Middle East and in the Magreb. Conversion of individuals and communities provided the supportive evidence to prove that fact.

It is likewise in these libraries and in the Swedish and Finnish archives that Szyszman found quite a documentation revealing the interest that the theologians had manifested for the Karaites during the Renaissance and the Century of light. Some of them undertook trips to the Karaites communities to find manuscripts. All the studies undertaken by Szyszman conclude that the history of Karaism has to be rethought and written anew.

In the mosaic of religious groups established in Egypt, the Karaite community is one of the oldest and has many traditions that strongly link it to that country. It is obvious that the history of Karaism and its faithfuls is scarcely known. Therefore, before investigating the state of this community we feel it is important to briefly present the principles of Karaism and how they propagated around the world.

THE DIFFERENT CURRENTS OF THE BIBLICAL MONOTHEISM

The appearance of monotheism in the Middle Eastern countries is linked to the figure of Abraham "father of the believer". In the midst of the biblical monotheism two tendencies have co-existed : one seeking to conserve the national and religious aspect of Israel, the other more open to exterior influence trying to give to this monotheism a universal dimension.

At the beginning of our era, a movement, known by the name of "Pharisaism" was headed by lawyers and religious leaders. This movement began to gain more acceptance and began to play a bigger role in the social and religious life. For the "Pharisees", religion allowed to preserve the integrity of the people of Israel as much in Palestine as in the diaspora.

We all know that the Temple of Jerusalem was the central point of religious life in Israel. Its clergy was numerous and resided all over the country. Sadok was the first important priest at the time of the foundation of the temple by Solomon that's why he was considered the eponym of the clergy, whose members named themselves "Sons of Sadok".

A split occurred around the II century B.C. between the priesthood and members of the "Hasmonaen" dynasty who were attempting to combine the priestly functions with the royal powers. The great priests ended up by forming a new party which has been involved in the fights that have not yet stopped tearing up Israel. This party is known in the Gospels as the "Saducees" referring to the rich and powerful "Sacerdotal" families who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead nor in the existence of angels.

THE ESSENIANS AND THE THERAPEUTES

Another group of the "Sons of Sadok" broke rank from the clergy in reaction to many compromises made. They were the "bene Sadok" as they named themselves ("Sadocites" - from the modern terminology, or Essenians as the Greek called them). The Essenians broke off with the Saducees and the Jerusalem Second temple's cult. They considered it soiled by the official clergy. They celebrated their holidays among themselves outside of Jerusalem according

to a calendar of their own. Their community used to lead a very active life in Qumran, by the shores of the Dead Sea, and formed an order quasi-monastic. Members of this community were also found in other parts of the world. The Essenians had an open mind toward anything that was noble and holy in the pagan world and were notably missionaries. The newly converted formed a distinct class in their community. An order related to the Essenians, the "Therapeutes", were established in Egypt on the shores of the Mareotis lake near Alexandria and were dedicated to a life of meditation.

THE END OF THE SECOND TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In 70 A.D. the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans and the dispersion of the people of Israel aroused question of survival. With the end of the worship at the temple, the Sadducees lost all reasons to be and apparently disappeared from the scene. The anxiety to preserve the specific traits of the people of Israel and their unity out of the national territory gave preponderance to the Pharisees who were the best organized and hence easily imposed their rule. It is under these conditions that the Judaism was formed. J. Bonsirven defines "Judaisme" as an ethnic religious community.

Its leaders were the rabbies, heirs of the Pharisees. Around the Vth century, they documented in the Talmud the elaborate traditions followed by many generations and gave them a value equal or superior to the holy writ. The Talmud to this day has protected the assimilation of the dispersed Jews among many powerful and learned communities. Thanks to the Talmud, the national and religious continuity was maintained for nearly two thousand years and allowed, in our era, to recreate the State of Israel.

Due to the Sadocites idealistic inward perfection and unwillingness to evolve with the times, their declining number was probably accelerated by the propagation of Christianity to which many converted. The rise of Islam in the VII century can partly be attributed to them.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE KARAIKISM AND ITS PROPAGATION

The appearance of Islam and the formation of the Arab empire abolished many political and cultural boundaries in the Middle East, encouraging then the development of the spiritual life. Under these conditions, the different groups of Sadocites who were leading until then an underground existence emerged. In the VIII century they were reorganized by the help of Anan, Son of David, and under the name of Karaites started to spread their doctrine. In a short time many communities were formed not only among the descendants of ancient Sadocites exiled from Palestine but also among many people of different ethnic origin, belonging to diverse cultures.

The major numeric missionary acquisition was in the Maghreb, with the conversion of many Berber tribes. Another success was achieved in the extreme orient of the world of that era, among many people from the Steppes, like the Khazars, the Comans and many more. Their descendants formed the European Karaite group still in existence. Individuals as well as groups throughout the world embraced Karaism. Some eminent personalities were among the converts. David Mukamis, an Arab philosopher of the IX century adopted this discipline and became the supreme religious chief of the Karaites.

The increase in number was followed by a cultural expansion. From the VIII century, a succession of eminent authors, theologians and laymen appeared among the karaites, especially in the Middle East. However after many blossoming centuries, an internal crises started to manifest itself in the midst of the karaisme causing the loss of its prominence. To make matters worse, a violent anti Karaite movement was initiated in the X century by the famous Jewish leader "Gaon Saadia al Faiyumi" and remains to this day. Hostility towards Karaisme has existed since those days and is reflected by different levels of violence depending on the period of time.

All these tensions weakened the karaites to such an extend that the only Karaite groups were to be found in the Arab world (except for traces in Europe): A tiny Karaite community in Irak, at Hitt on the Euphrate and an important community in Egypt almost completely concentrated in Cairo.

THE KARAITE IN MEDIEVAL EGYPT

The time of the emergence of the Egyptian Karaite community cannot be determine accurately. Its origin could probably be found within the community of Sadocites established in this country. Throughout their history, the Karaites were closely tied to the way of life of their homeland. Since the IX century, they were numerous and enjoyed a prosperous existence in Fustat (Old Cairo), first capital of the Arab world after the conquest of Egypt. Their influence extended to the Khalifs of the Fatimide dynasty. In that era, the family of Banu Sahl at-Tustari whose members held prominent positions in public life stood out. One of them, Abu Sa'd became a vizir whose influence gave him the power of a viceroy.

The cultural life of the Egyptian Karaites also flourished in the middle ages. Many eminent authors contributed to such a development.

THE DESTINY OF THE CAIRO COMMUNITY IN MODERN TIME

Although weakened, the karaite community of Cairo had in the middle of the XX century some seven thousands pious and devoted followers. They were mainly in two quarters of the Capital : at Khoronfish, and Abbasyeh where the more affluent resided. The Cairo community was fairly active and hence was able to revive sister communities in other parts of the world. It maintained the best relations with its Moslem and Copte neighbors. The symbol of this harmonious coexistence was the karaite parish school in the Khoronfish neighborhood which was subsidized by the State. There, the majority of the students were coptes and moslems, the karaites kids were a minority. The attitude of the Egyptian government toward the karaites was most benevolent as The authorities revealed their intentions to support and help the community. This relationship became more cordial after the 1952 revolution, when the new government took the initiative to establish a good relationship with the karaites. This was evidenced by the visit of the chief of state to the community as well as his warm speech given on that occasion.

The karaite community of Cairo was then able to become a nucleus for the renewal of karaisme. Meanwhile, while faithfully pursuing their secular fight, their adversaries organized a series of incidents (where people died) that enflamed the relationship with the

Egyptian government. The government made a futile attempt to normalize the relationship. But, as an over-reaction and encouraged by offer of financial support by the same subversive elements which triggered the incidents, the Karaites could perceive of no solution other than initiate a mass migration from Egypt. Under the guise of saving the Karaites from the "Arab oppression" financial help was advanced to members of the community to insure that the migration would be total and hence decimate the last Karaite community. The motivation behind the financial aid was not truly benevolent, as the migrants had to agree to repay all cost associated with their migration. Hence, by leaving Egypt these people not only left behind all their worldly possessions but also found themselves indebted to their saviours for many years to come. Within a quarter century the Karaite population of Egypt dwindled from seven thousands to about forty individuals mostly aged.

The community of Hitt was equally subjected to the same fate, and lost many of its members. Because of its numeric weakness, its complete destruction was easier and faster.

The Karaite emigration from the arab countries was mainly directed to Israel where many karaite establishments were created. Actually the karaites in this state are subject to discrimination not only from the population but from the authorities too. This discrimination was far worse than that directed towards the Moslem and Christian Palestinians. In effect, the karaite were being refused the most elementary right, that of administering religious matters according to their law and the recognition of the legality of their civil transactions. Their children are hence considered illegitimate. Teaching of the religious aspect of Karaisme in the schools is non existent and can be had only in secrecy.

The karaite's holy shrines and specially the burial grounds were desecrated and the tombstones broken. The Israeli police, known all over the world for its efficiency, was incapable to identify the perpetrators. Following these events, the Karaite lived in fear demonstrated by the fact that they did not dare reveal the matter to the public. The karaites of Israel reacted by fasting for one day, this had no effect on the public opinion. Even European member of their families preferred to keep silence about these humiliation for fear to arouse more violent reaction against their kin.

The most obvious result of such a policy toward the karaites was to stir up regrets for the religious freedom that they enjoyed in their Arab native land. There, in fact their holy shrines were respected and protected. They were only responsible to their conscience. No one interfered in their community affairs. They raised their children according to the principles of their religion, following the traditions of their ancestors without having to account to anyone, or struggle to defend their basic right for existence.

The hostility toward the karaites is revealed equally by the attitudes of the authorities toward all the material evidence of their beliefs and history. Hence, having occupied in 1967 the old city of Jerusalem, the authorities did not show an interest in preserving the land that belonged to the karaites and where a few buildings and underground sanctuaries were located. A residential building was erected on the land. Even-though this venerated sanctuary, central point to the karaite universe, built according to the VIII century tradition, was already protected as a historical site by the Hay convention of 1954.

THE MASSORETES KARAITES AND THE BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS

Other traces of the karaites' culture were not spared either. All kind of documents and specially the old manuscripts of the Bible are systematically sequestered from them.

The Karaite faith dictates that it is the responsibility of each faithful to personally study the text of the holy scriptures. One of the first tasks of the Karaites was to generate a faithful duplication of the text of the holy bible. It was the Massorete scholars and particularly members of several generations of the Asher clan who between the VIII and X century generated the text for reading and how it should be vocalized.

The Egyptian karaites possessed two manuscripts that were the complete work of this venerated family. The community of Fustat (old Cairo) retained the Codex which included the complete bible. It was stolen in the XIII or XIV century but later reappeared in Alep in the hands of the jewish community. Currently it is in Jerusalem. This manuscript, famous all over the world, is known as the "Codex of Alep" contains the original text of the bible. Having been stolen at Fustat, this manuscript underwent many alterations to conceal its karaite origin. Recently it was published and presented as a manuscript of jewish origin.

Another manuscript, the "Cairo Codex" written in 895 includes the books of Prophets. It is the oldest biblical manuscript dated by the scribe; it is still kept by the karaite community of Cairo.

WILL THE OLDEST DATED BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPT LEAVE CAIRO ?

These past few years, the Cairo Codex has been coveted by many jewish institutions in the United State who put pressure not only on the karaites but also on the Egyptians so that they may borrow the manuscript in exchange for a large sum of money. These institutions state that their only interest is to help the community and the restoration of the manuscript.

Meanwhile the late professor P. Kahle, who is a worldwide authority in this area, after examining the Codex in february 1956, certified that it was in perfect condition, undamaged from the first to the last page. Therefore the egyptian karaites are quite puzzled. Are they going to be lured again by forgetting their past experience of this type of "loan" ? (1) Will the karaite community and the egyptian authority let one of their cultural treasures get out without any scientific necessity ?

(1) In Lithuania and Poland, the karaite enjoyed complete freedom and independence assured by the royal decree. In the XVII century, the jewish community borrowed this document and did not return it to its rightful owners. Deprived of the protection of the decree the karaites fell under the jewish domination, were morally humiliated and materially exploited to the point were they had to look for financial help from their brothers in Crimea. (cf. The Journal of Judaism Study, 5 Leyde 1975 p. 219-220).